

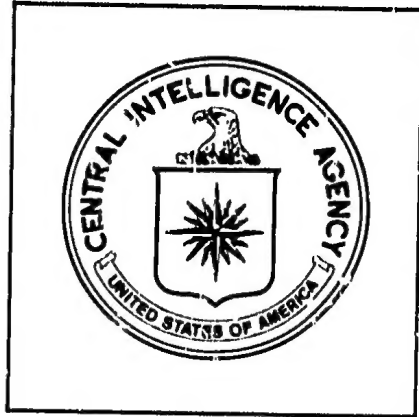
CIAOCI SNMEASA 750311
Middle East, Africa, South Asia

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S/NFD 1 of 1
No. 0442/75

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STAFF NOTES:

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No. 0442/75
March 11, 1975

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MIDDLE EAST - AFRICA - SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Arab States

Purchases of US Commercial Aircraft Increase

Arab purchases of US commercial aircraft increased at a dramatic pace last year, reaching a record \$750 million, almost double the sales of the previous year. The Lebanese and the Saudi Arabians were the largest purchasers. Sales in 1975 will probably total \$500 million.

European manufacturers, which held nearly half of the Arab market in 1972, offered little competition for the US, accounting for less than one percent of sales. Only in Syria did the French mount a strong campaign with the A-300 Airbus, but lost out to the Boeing 747. Arab fleets are now composed mainly of US-built aircraft.

The new aircraft will be used to expand Arab international air services. Passenger growth for the area is increasing about 20 percent each year at a time when worldwide traffic has stagnated. The Arab countries are likely to increase their limited service to Europe and begin flights to the US. (UNCLASSIFIED)

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Ghana

Acheampong's Presidential Aspirations Surface Again

There are signs that Colonel Acheampong, head of the three-year-old military junta, is again trying to implement his controversial plan to assume the title of president. In recent weeks, the Ghanaian press has carried appeals from editors and tribal chiefs around the country that Acheampong be named president. The publicity campaign, clearly intended to test popular reaction to the idea, probably is being orchestrated by Commissioner for Information Colonel Tachie-Menson, one of Acheampong's closest advisers.

Under the junta's collegial system of rule, all important decisions are made by the ten-man National Redemption Council. Acheampong, the council's chairman and principal figure would like to weaken the ability of other council members and their military supporters to curb his moves. He apparently is convinced he can gain greater independence from the council by assuming the formal title and duties of president.

Acheampong will have to proceed cautiously to avoid being put down by his military colleagues. He tried to launch similar trial balloons a year ago, but shelved his plans because of opposition from the military establishment. At that time, some officers, already disturbed by Acheampong's tendency to act independently, reportedly viewed his presidential designs as a threat to their political influence. (SECRET)

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Republic of Maldives

Prime Minister Removed

President Ibrahim Nasir last Thursday dismissed Prime Minister Zaki and imposed presidential rule on the tiny Indian Ocean republic. Although Zaki is popular, there has been no evidence of protests since his ouster.

Zaki was a competent administrator, and many Maldivians view him as the only alternative to Nasir. Zaki's growing prestige may have prompted Nasir to depose him. Nasir has been the dominant political figure in the islands since well before independence in 1965. Although he created the post of prime minister in 1972 and named Zaki to the post, Nasir has never been willing to share real power.

Zaki's ouster came less than three weeks after the Maldivian parliament had given him an overwhelming vote of confidence. Nasir is now said to be planning to abolish the position of prime minister.

Nasir himself is widely disliked for his repressive rule and dishonesty. He may well be uneasy about continuing popular discontent following an unsuccessful attempt by a small rebel group to unseat him last June. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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